



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 17 April 2007

COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Community Ambulance Cover and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The amendments to the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003 will ensure that the levy continues to apply appropriately on the commencement of full retail competition in the electricity market from 1 July 2007. Since the introduction of the ambulance tax, rural and regional Queensland has not been given value for money. Under consecutive conservative governments, the Ambulance Service was well managed and met the needs of patients for emergency care. Even former Labor Premier Wayne Goss was able to manage the Ambulance Service—but not Premier Beattie, and this is without excuse. Premier Beattie became the first Queensland Premier who could not manage the Ambulance Service and the first Premier to introduce an ambulance tax on the public because he claimed that the government could no longer afford to prop up Queensland's Ambulance Service due to many people not contributing via subscription to ambulance fees.

After much protest from many sectors of the community to what was an unfair new tax, the Premier stated that it was the only way to fix and create a better well-funded Ambulance Service. After four years of turmoil, this question must be asked on behalf of so many Queenslanders: why is our Ambulance Service in such a deplorable state when it was promised that the ambulance tax would fix the Ambulance Service? In rural Queensland ambulance services are sporadic despite the fact that each and every resident pays their ambulance levy. Many incidents have been raised in this House about the overworked, understaffed ambulance officers trying to deliver a service in rural and regional Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Moorhead): Member for Charters Towers, you were here when I spoke to the member for Burnett and understood the ruling that the Deputy Speaker made. This bill is about community ambulance cover in terms of changes to the electricity retail market. This is not about ambulance services.

Mr KNUTH: The front of the bill says 'Community Ambulance Cover and Other Acts Amendment Bill'. This is about ambulance cover. We have raised the issues that are affecting the people who have been hit by this ambulance tax and we have been shut down time and time again. This is the parliament. This is about democracy. This is where we bring it to the attention of the government. It is disappointing that we cannot raise these issues, because if we were in government and we failed in terms of introducing any tax those opposite would want to be able to speak about it.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr KNUTH: I will raise the remainder of my concerns in an adjournment speech.